

The Creative Hi-Hat Foot

A Fresh Approach for the Steady Timekeeper

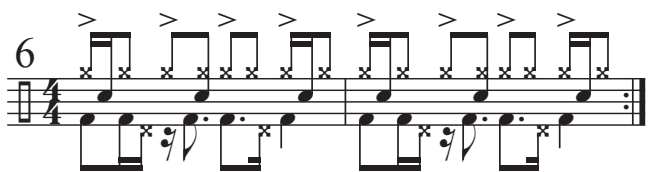
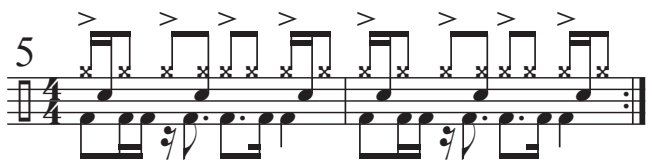
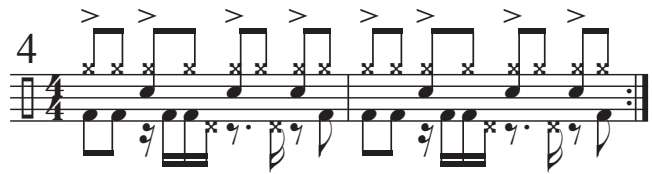
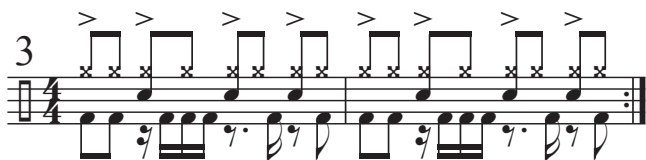
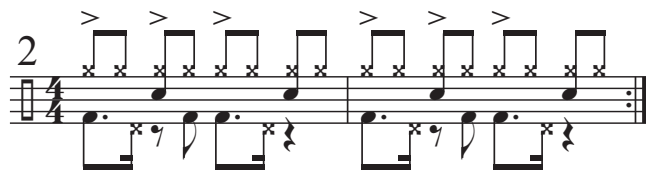
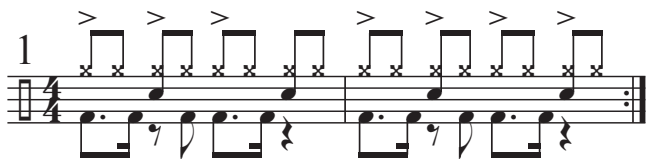
by Stephane Chamberland

In this lesson we'll utilize the hi-hat foot to creatively expand our groove vocabulary. At some point I realized that forgetting about the left foot can be destructive for the groove. Although drummers often employ the hi-hat to keep steady time, we can expand its use to create an interesting and open sound. However, if we want to incorporate and expand this voice, it must fit the music. The exercises in this lesson will help you develop more control, independence, freedom, and musicality with the hi-hat pedal.

In jazz, the ride and hi-hat voices are crucial to the groove's feel. In *Beyond Bop Drumming*, a highly recommended book by the author and jazz educator John Riley, comping patterns are demonstrated that incorporate the hi-hat foot. I fell in love with the musicality and surprising phrases that could be created from Riley's ideas. After recording my own practice sessions, I noticed that this concept can be applied to other styles as well.

Let's begin practicing the concept by replacing some bass drum notes with the hi-hat foot in a rock-groove context. Start by playing 8th notes on the hi-hat with your ride hand. Later, try switching lead hands when practicing these patterns. This open-handed approach will help you balance your weaker side and improve your facility. Experiment with orchestration by placing your lead hand on a ride bell or floor tom. You can also play an upbeat accent pattern instead of only accenting the downbeats.

In each of the following exercises, we'll start with the main groove before incorporating the hi-hat foot.



When practicing these patterns, imagine that your limbs are totally independent, both in terms of their coordination and relative volume. You can practice with a heel-down or heel-up technique on the hi-hat pedal or incorporate the entire leg for loud strokes. My book *Pedal Control* offers more information about these techniques. Because the snare, bass drum, and ride are generally louder than the hi-hat pedal, you'll have to balance your limbs' dynamics to make sure the hi-hat variations can be heard. Play the hi-hat pedal at the same volume as, or louder than, the rest of the drumset.

Remember to practice with a metronome, and make each exercise groove. Also, compose your own grooves, and again start replacing some bass drum notes with the hi-hat pedal.

Don't forget to practice jazz independence patterns with other books such as *The Pulse of Jazz* by Nic Marcy, or for other styles, *The Hi-Hat Foot* by Garey Williams. And to listen to some of these concepts applied to a jazz-fusion setting, check out Vinnie Colaiuta's playing on the Jing Chi song "Going Nowhere," from the album *Jing Chi Live at Yoshi's*.

Stephane Chamberland is an internationally recognized drummer, clinician, educator, and author who currently leads the Stephane Chamberland Jazz Quartet. He is the co-author of the books *The Weaker Side*, *Pedal Control*, and *Drumset Duets* (Wizdom Media). For more info, visit stephanechamberland.com.

